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A Review of Mr. Henry George's "Progress and Poverty."

By LORD BRAMWELL.

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"*Has not received the attention its acuteness and brilliancy merit.*"—TIMES.

Nationalisation of Land.

MR. GEORGE has, in his book called "Progress and Poverty," discovered that poverty and all its concomitants are in some way or another engendered by progress itself. And he proves it thus:—"Go," he says, "into one of the new communities where Anglo-Saxon vigour is first beginning the race of progress, &c.,* and, though you will find an absence of wealth, you will find no beggars. The tramp comes with the locomotive, and almshouses and prisons are as surely the marks of material progress as are costly dwellings, rich warehouses, and magnificent chambers." Apparently,

* When I use this "&c." I mean that I omit some of Mr. George's eloquence.

therefore, wealth, the result of progress, is the cause of poverty. Now Mr. George might just as well say that the sugar hogshead at the grocer's door has brought forth the flies and ragged children that are about it. Did it never occur to Mr. George that the large cities and places where the locomotive has been and where wealth is to be found, attract the idle, the weak, the dishonest, and the thriftless? Does he not know that the reason they are not found where Anglo-Saxon vigour is just beginning a race of progress, is because the exercise of Anglo-Saxon vigour is unpalatable to them? Mr. George makes the common mistake of those who boast the virtues of rural districts. Why is there not a professional pickpocket in the small village? Because there is no scope for his talents; there are not pockets enough for his industry. Why is there no tramp, no beggar? Because there are not enough persons *of whom to beg.*

But Mr. George is wrong when he says that "the tendency of what we call material progress is in nowise to improve the condition of the lowest class in the essentials of healthy, happy, human life." That is untrue. The great bulk of the people of this country are better off than ever they were. They have more wages, more food, better homes (though far from good enough in towns), and better clothing than ever they had. Everything proves this. Statistics of every sort. The quantities consumed. The quantities of luxuries — drink, tobacco — the diminished number of paupers, the lessened poor rates; savings banks, benefit societies. What Mr. George means by the lowest class is uncertain. If he means the tramp and beggar, what he says is true, and would be if wealth was multiplied a hundred-fold. But it is untrue that increased power of production, and increased wealth *have not* benefited the whole people. What has

become of the increased food and clothing? Have those wicked rich people eaten ten times what they ate before, and worn ten yards of clothing when they formerly used one? The complaint is untrue and silly. No doubt there are many labourers with large families who could eat, and eat advantageously more than they do, and so they could if all produce was divided in equal rations. One may wish that every man had his *poulet au pôt*. One may have a misgiving as to whether it is not wrong that one man should ride in his carriage. at a cost which would keep two or three families, while, at the same time, as many families are underfed. But till we are good enough to work as fairly for the benefit of all as we do each for himself, we are not fit to be Socialists, and the best thing for all, is that each should work for himself, though the result may be poverty and wealth, want and have.

Mr. George, having made this discovery, proceeds

to seek the cause—Why wealth produces poverty? One would think that an obvious remedy would be to get rid of the wealth, to destroy the locomotive and the great houses, and revert to the log hut, in whose neighbourhood, Mr. George tells us, no beggars are to be found. But Mr. George does not suggest this. He first deals with some economic opinions that have been entertained and promulgated by some of the best and ablest men the world has seen, but which Mr. George denounces as blunders, the result of a perversion of intellect scarcely honest.

Mr. George proceeds to put his enquiry which, he says, is "Why, in spite of increase in productive power, do wages tend to a minimum, which will give but a bare living?" He assumes the truth of that proposition, which, however, is untrue. For if land increases in productive power, there is not, necessarily, the tendency he mentions. He then proceeds to attack the proposition stated by Mill,

and agreed to by all economists but Mr. George, if he calls himself one, viz., "Industry is limited by capital. There can be no more industry than is supplied by materials and food to eat. Self-evident as it is, it is often forgotten that the people of a country are maintained, and have their wants supplied, not by the produce of present labour, but by past." Not so, says Mr. George, with an enviable self-confidence, to feel half which one would be content to be half as wrong. "How," says he, "can that be, if capital is stored labour? How can it be that it existed before labour? And consider the case of the naked savage who lives on shell-fish and fruit, &c." Of course, nobody ever denied that there must have been a time when labour preceded capital. What Mill affirms is not in relation to naked savages living on shell-fish, but in relation to modern highly complex civilisation. Let us examine some of Mr. George's arguments to prove,

as he says, that "wages, instead of being drawn from capital, are, in reality, drawn from the product of the labour for which they are paid." "See," says he, "the case of a ship which grows in value from day to day while being built. Has the builder lost any of his capital? No; there it is on the increased value of the ship." But the ship is not built of sovereigns or dollars; nor have the workmen fed on the latter. It is built of materials which have been saved or stored, and the workmen are fed and clothed on and with materials saved and stored. Mr. George would reason less ill if he could eliminate money from men's transactions and suppose them done by barter. Let us take one of his new communities where Anglo-Saxon vigour is at work. An Anglo-Saxon goes to a settler for work. Yes, there are three trees to be cut down, but I shall have nothing to give you for six months, *when the* timber merchant buys of me. Well, says

the workman, but I want food and clothing; meanwhile, let us go to the timber merchant. He is willing to take the timber, but can't give the price or value till the house builder buys, which will be in six months. Then they go to the builder, who has store of meat and wheat and clothing. He agrees to advance it to the timber merchant, who advances it to the farmer, who advances it to the labourer, who labours. Does Mr. George say that in this case capital has nothing to do with setting labour to work? But this is the case with all work in civilised societies. It is the case where the capitalist finds the ship, the weapons, and the food of the whale-fisher. Try it thus. Suppose all the machinery in the world suddenly destroyed, or all the stored food, what would become of labour? "Oh, but," says George, "the grain thus held in reserve through the machinery of exchange, and *advances passed to* the use of the cultivators is

set free, in effect, *produced* by the work done for the next crop!" So the work for the next crop *produces* the former crop. If so, the labourer ought to be paid for the production of two crops. Mr. George might say this is a question of words. But it is not; it is a question of substance and of things; Mr. George, like many others, would reason better if he used right words. Mr. George asks (chap. 5), "What, then are the functions of capital?" He answers,—"Capital consists of wealth used for the procurement of more wealth; or, as, I think, it may be defined—wealth in the course of exchange. Capital, therefore, increases the power of wealth to produce wealth." Why, "therefore"—but even if so, as a spade and a barrow are as much capital as a locomotive, the admission goes a long way to show that capital sets labour to work—but, in truth, Mr. George (Book 3, chap. 3) answers himself.

For he says: "There are three modes of production in one of which capital may, and in the other two must aid labour." Mr. George, having attacked the economists about capital, next has a furious tilt at Malthus, and the doctrine connected with his name. And it may well be that the geometrical and arithmetical ratios cannot be justified. But the main proposition is, undoubtedly, true, viz., That, left undisturbed, population increases, and by increasing presses on the means of subsistence. It is self-evident. It stares one in the face. Why has North America its 70 or 80 millions of European descent, but for this pressure? Why do the Eastern Americans go West? Why do hundreds of thousands of emigrants land on American shores yearly? Why does the Chinaman eat the filth and garbage he does? Not from pressure on the means of subsistence, says Mr. George, for 100 men will *produce more than 100* times what one man can

Very likely, in certain cases. Ah, but, says Mr. George, and 100 times 100 men can produce more than 100 times what 100 men can. Well, this brings us to 10,000, and 100 times that is a million, and then we have 100 millions, and then 10,000 millions, all producing more per head than their predecessors. It does not prove this to show that the earth is not full, nor the best use made of it. Besides, suppose it could maintain the ten thousand millions, it could not maintain one hundred times that number. What does Mr. George mean? Why there would not be standing room. It is idle to say that increase of population does not press, will not eventually press on the means of subsistence. It does; we all know it, and, oddly enough, it is in part the foundation of Mr. George's argument. And the pressure is comparative, as most things are in this world. Not a pressure that *could not* be borne, but that could be lessened, and

that has been lessened by a diminution of the population through emigration. It is certain that in England, at least, the average well-being of the population is greater than ever it was. But suppose there had not been that emigration, and suppose America had not been peopled, and sent us food! What would have been the condition of things? Would there have been no pressure on subsistence? Could we have produced that half of the wheat we consume which we now import? Some day America will be full. Mr. George admits that there may be "small islands, such as Pitcairn's, cut off from communication with the rest of the world, and from the exchanges which are necessary to the improved modes of production resorted to as population becomes dense, which may seem to offer examples in point. A moment's reflection, however, will show that these exceptional cases are not in point." Will it? I have reflected all the time it

took to read the paragraph and to copy it, and that reflection has not shown me that the case is not in point. It is. The world is Pitcairn's Island enlarged. It would have been better if Mr. George had shown why the case is not in point.

Proceed to consider some of Mr. George's opinions, observing in passing that he has got right notions on the theory of rent. He agrees with Ricardo and Malthus, and owns and shows that the increase of rent is not caused by the landowner, but by the increasing wants of man, in short, by the pressure of population on subsistence.

Mr. George, in Book 3, chap. 3, discusses whether interest is "natural or equitable." And he deals with the case of James and William and the plane. James has a plane which it takes ten days to make, and which will last the 290 working days of the year. William wants the plane, and agrees to

give James for it an equally good plane at the end of the year and a plank. Now, asks Mr. George, is that "natural or equitable?" "See," says he, "the case at the end of the year. James having parted with his plane, occupies ten days in making a new one, and then works for 290 days, at the end of which he will get a new plane from William. James, therefore, at the end of the year, will have done 290 days' work and possesses a new plane. But that would have been the case if he had kept his own plane, worn it out in 290 days, and then made a new plane in the remaining ten. Why, then, should William give him anything, and so make his own condition worse and James's better?" Wonderful! Mr. George thinks the promise of a plane as good as a plane. But, why put a year? Why not ten years? Why should not the promise to return the plane in ten years or a hundred be as good as the plane itself? Mr. George, however,

seems to think as well as can be guessed from some hazy writing, that as a plane might be exchanged for seed, and seed might, if put into the ground, yield an increase not due wholly to labour; therefore a plane may, perhaps, be reasonably parted with on the terms of getting back a plane and something more. The truth—the common, plain sense is, that the plane in hand at the beginning of the year is worth to William, in his opinion, and in truth, more than a plane at the end of the year, or more than a plane made in the first ten days of the year. Like a sensible man he agrees to give more for it; and for corresponding reasons, James will not let him have it unless he does. Does Mr. George think that savings' banks, building societies, and others should pay no interest?

Mr. George, in Book 3, chap. 3, intituled "The Statics of the Problem thus explained"—whatever that *may* mean—says: "The increase of rent

explains why wages and interest do not increase. The cause which gives the land to the landowner is the cause which denies it to the labourer and capitalist. That wages and interest are higher in new than in old countries is not, as the standard economists say, because nature makes a greater return to the application of labour and capital, but because land is cheaper." Cheaper than what? I suppose than land elsewhere—in an old country. But what is the meaning of "cheaper." It is not a question of pounds or dollars. Land is cheaper when it does make "a greater return to the application of labour and capital." And whether it shall or not does not depend on the landlord, as, indeed, Mr. George shows. If one man, or ten, or, perhaps, a thousand men owned all the land in an isolated territory they might fix its price; but as it is, the price is fixed by nature. A deal of mischievous *and dishonest* nonsence has been talked about

landlordism. Rent exists in the nature of things, and would exist in substance if we had an agrarian law to-morrow. If one acre of land will produce four quarters of wheat, with the same expenditure of labour and capital as will only produce two quarters on another acre, and it is worth while to cultivate the poorer acre (rentless, perhaps), the first acre will bear and pay a rent of two quarters; and if, on the agrarian division, it fell to the lot of A. B., he would receive from it two quarters as a return for his labour and capital, and two quarters in the nature of rent. It is true, in a sense (not always, as Mr. George says, but sometimes), that the increase of land values is at the expense of the value of labour, but it is for a reason that no legislation can prevent, viz., the pressure of population on subsistence. Mr. George finishes this Book 3 by saying: "To see human beings in the most abject, &c., condition, you must go not to unfenced

prairies, in the backwoods, &c., but to the great cities, where the ownership of a little patch of ground is a fortune." I have dealt with this before. Mr. George might as well have added, but where wages are higher, and the people better fed, clothed, and even housed, than elsewhere.

Book 4, chap. 3, Mr. George says: "The effect of labour-saving instruments will be to extend the demand." Yes, if there are mouths to be fed, not otherwise, *i.e.*, if population presses on subsistence. Because, but for that pressure; but for an increase in the population, where productive powers were doubled, and only half the land was wanted to feed the population, the competition among the land-owners would reduce rent to nothing.

In Book 6, Mr. George gives the remedy for these evils. He discusses other possible remedies than *his own and rejects* them. I notice one instance,

for the sake of Mr. George's style and language. He speaks of the "*robbery* involved in the protective tariff of the United States." That is a word Mr. George is very fond of. Whatever is not right in his judgment, is not only wrong, but dishonestly wrong—"robbery." Nobody thinks worse of a protective tariff than I do; but I attribute its existence to an honest want of knowing better, at least, in many cases. Thiers was, and Bismark is, a Protectionist—are they "robbers?"—are Mr. George's countrymen "robbers?" Might not some people think the term might be more reasonably applied to those who say "We must make the land common property"—without compensation to present owners, and who advocate its being done covertly, not openly. "To do that would be a needless shock to present customs and habits of thought, which is to be avoided. Let the individuals who now hold it (land) still retain, if they want to, what

they are pleased to call their land; let them continue to call it their land; let them buy and sell, and bequeath and devise it. We may safely leave them the shell if we take the kernel. It is not necessary to confiscate land, it is only necessary to confiscate rent." And this Mr. George proposes, and without compensation. He enquires into the "justice of the remedy." He says: "If we are all here by permission of the Creator, we are all here with an equal title to the enjoyment of His bounty, with an equal right to the use of all that nature so impartially offers. The Almighty, who created the earth for man, and man for the earth, has entailed it upon all the generations of the children of men, &c." It is singular what an acquaintance with the Creator's designs is shown by writers of the stamp of Mr. George. One may be allowed a respectful doubt whether what has so long existed and been permitted was not intended, not that things have

gone wrong till Mr. George came to the rescue. At all events, it will be admitted that Benevolence would approve that condition of things which was most for the good of mankind. And if the private ownership of land is so, we may well have it without Mr. George's Land Act, to get rid of the entail he speaks of. He says: "The poorest child born in London has as much right to the estates of the Duke of Westminster as his eldest son, and the puniest infant that comes wailing, &c, has as much right to the Astor property as the Astors. And he is *robbed* (Mr. George's favourite word) if the right is denied." I am afraid Mr. George's notions of "right" are hazy. I will not say that the man who catches fish or game, or gathers fruit has not a natural right to do it. Though Mr. George would find it difficult to persuade his Patagonian, if he met the man with the fish or the game, that he (the *Patagonian*) might not in all right and reason take

it. His conscience would not be troubled any more than would be that of the Bedouin, if he eased Mr. George of a watch made by him with much labour. However be it that there are natural rights, that is in a state of nature, where there is nothing artificial. But men have formed themselves into a social state, all is artificial, and nothing merely natural. In such a state no rights ought to exist, but what are for the general good—all that are, should. And what we have to consider is not any vapouring about "the land being entailed by Providence, the decrees of the Creator, puny infants coming wailing into the world in the squalidest room of the most miserable tenement house," &c.; *but whether private or separate property in land is for the good of the community*. Certainly, there is rather a strong *primâ facie* case that it is, since it exists throughout the world. "Oh!" says *Mr. George,* "tyranny, violence, and usurpation."

He quotes M. de Laveleye—"In all primitive societies the soil was the joint property of the tribes, and was subject to periodical distribution among all the families, so that each might live by their labour, as nature has ordained." And why is it not so now? Because we are not in a *primitive* state; because we are older and wiser, and know better, as M. de Laveleye ought to do. Periodical distribution! Is it not absolutely certain that a man will do better with a piece of land; will get more out of it each year, if he has it for two years instead of one; for ten years instead of two; and for all time instead of ten? If the profit of his care and labour will be his at some time, will he not bestow them when otherwise he would not? It cannot be doubted. Tax him if you like, tax his rent, tax him *ad valorem;* but leave him enough to tempt him to improve. It is too plain; separate *property* in land, as in sheep and oxen, is for the

good of the community. And, if so, the quantity that one man may own can no more be limited than can the quantity of sheep or oxen he may own, nor the use he shall make of it. Have an agrarian law, give each man his share; in ten years the careful, skilful, and provident allottees would be the owners of the share of the careless, unskilful, and improvident. And it is for the general good it should be so.

But even if labour alone gave property, the landowner's case is much better on Mr. George's principles than he admits. Suppose by labour a a piece of land was banked and enclosed from the sea—made, in short. Not a part of the land 'originally entailed on the puniest," &c., Mr. George must admit a right to it in the man whose labour made it. But what is the difference between the case put and land in general, except that in land in *general there was before* labour was put on it what

has been called the "prairie value." That is what, if anything, was "entailed on the puniest," &c. Tax that—confiscate that, if confiscation is right, but not the stored labour which is on the land. Mr. George seems to admit this. What would the tax be? Something worth stealing, though not as much as Mr. George thinks. But confiscation is not right. Separate or private property in land is for the good of the community, and should be respected like any other property, and for the same reason. There is one passage in the book that may be noticed. As far as it is intelligible it is, that as a man belongs to himself, so his labour, when put in a concrete form, belongs to him; and that there can be no other natural rights, as other rights are destructive of this. Perhaps! as I do not know what is meant. But then it would seem that the man who has cut down and stored a hundred trees, *has interfered* with my right, as great as his, to cut

them down. However, whatever is meant, I repeat we are concerned with social, not natural rights.

Mr. George speaks of the "justice" of the remedy. Justice! A man labours and saves, acquires a piece of land, perhaps taken in payment of a bad debt, dies with the comforting belief he has provided for his widow and orphans. Mr. George calls it "justice" to confiscate it. Another man has been a member of a building society, and built his house, and believes it was his own. But Mr. George would charge him a heavy rent for the land on which it stands, because "every patch of land has become of great value." This is Mr. George's notion of "justice." They are robbers, receivers of stolen goods, knowing they are stolen, and can have no right themselves, nor give any to the widow and orphan. No doubt, to confiscate land and raise the public revenue out of it would be a fine thing for all *the community, save the* landowners. But so would

confiscating chattels be a fine thing for all but chattel owners, and the confiscation of labour would be a splendid thing for all but the labourer. It may be there is much to be said for the taxation of land, and that a community would do well, if it resolved at the outset, to raise its taxation exclusively from land. There is much to be said for it, especially if the taxation is not so excessive as to deprive the land-owner of all interest in improvement; but when the law for ages has allowed private property in land, to take that property from one man and leave property in oxen and horses in another, because the land is stolen goods, and its owner ought to know that—that, I say, is "robbery," and repugnant to all notions of fairness. Mr. George does not, indeed, propose to take all the rent. He would leave enough to make it worth the while of land-owners to become tax-collectors. Mr. George says: "In *every civilised* country the value of the land

taken as a whole, is sufficient to bear the entire expense of Government." We flatter ourselves England is a civilised country. If it is, this statement is untrue. The whole agricultural rent, without abatement for collecting it, would not defray those expenses. If the expense were so borne, personal property would be untaxed, and Mr. George, this friend of the poor and the wailing infant, would would let the Rothschilds and Astors go untaxed, while he filched the patch of land got by the savings of hard work, which gave a bare subsistence to the widow and orphan.

I have now gone through the more prominent matters in Mr. George's book. There are other errors in it, but warned by him, I will try not to be tedious. It is a mischievous book, for it holds out expectations that cannot be realised, and proposes their realisation by measures most injurious. It is *a foolish book, for though* Mr. George is anything

but a foolish man, his ingenuity is so perverse that his book is filled with foolishness. It is the most arrogant, self-sufficient performance ever seen. No one was right before Mr. George, and some of the best, greatest, and noblest men who ever lived are spoken of with contempt as blunderers and evil disposed. It is also a book which one would think was the work of an ill-conditioned man. According to Mr. George nobody is mistaken and honest. Robbers and robbery are his favourite words, and he seems to think he can set the world right and teach it, if he bawls "robbery" loud enough, to practice it.

Mr. George says that landowners evaded the land tax; he does not mention that personality has been allowed to escape liability to the poor rate. He finds fearful fault with the British Government of India. Now if ever there was an honest Government, if ever one nation had cause to be proud of the way it

governed another, it is England and its government of India. There is but one thing considered in that government, viz., what is for the good of India. Mr. George seems to have a sort of sympathy for Nihilists and Communists, and shows some contempt for the Irish that they only "occasionally" murder a landlord. Does Mr. George doubt that those landlords honestly believe in their right to the land, and are murdered for that belief and for acting on it? What would he think of an occasional murder of an author for preaching robbery, of *preaching* which offence Mr. George, in the landlord's judgment, is as much guilty, as they, in his judgment, are guilty of the *practice*. But Mr. George is safe. He entertains honestly, I believe, the opinions he expresses, and ought to be allowed to give utterance to them; but let him show the same liberality to the opinions of those who differ with him.

WOULD THE MORE GENERAL DISTRIBUTION OF CAPITAL OR LAND, OR THE STATE-MANAGEMENT OF CAPITAL OR LAND, PROMOTE OR IMPAIR THE PRODUCTION OF WEALTH AND THE WELFARE OF THE COMMUNITY?

Answer by LORD BRAMWELL.

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The first part of the question assumes that a more general distribution of capital or land can by some means be brought about. For otherwise, it would be to discuss what would result from what cannot take place. I cannot agree to that assumption; I cannot at least agree that it can be brought about by any means which would cause it to promote the production of wealth and the welfare of the community.

The general distribution of capital and land in a community is the result of natural causes, and

could be altered only by legislation, which would be mischievous, and impair the production of wealth and the welfare of the community.

There are two men, one born healthy, strong, intelligent, industrious, thrifty—the other sickly, weak, dull, idle and improvident. These two men will certainly be differently off in life. So will their children and children's children, even if the State should make itself heir to all deceased persons. One of the two men will be poor, the other rich. How is a more general distribution of land and capital among such to be brought about? Is the poor man to be made rich? How? Is the rich man to be made less rich? That can, indeed, be done, but can it be done by any means that would promote the production of wealth and the welfare of the community? Certainly not!

I know, of course, that a law might be made

bringing everything into hotchpot, and dividing the mass into equal shares, one for each member of the community, which certainly would produce a more general distribution of land and capital; but I suppose no one contemplates this. For my own part, I have no superstitious reverence for the institution of separate or private property. Show to me that its abolition would be for the general good, and I would vote for it, letting down the present possessors gently. But my opinion is most clearly the other way, for reasons I shall give at length in answer to the second part of the question. If that institution is to be preserved, it would be useless to make such a distribution as I have supposed. For at the end of six months there would be a difference in the wealth of members of the community. Some would have wasted their shares, some have increased theirs (unless, indeed, that was forbidden, which would be most disastrous), and it would result that

some would be poor and some rich. I cannot suppose, then, that a law directly taking from those who have, and giving to those who want, is expedient. But, unless some such mischievous contrivance is resorted to, there must be an inequality of conditions, and an inequality in which there will be the very poor and the very rich. I say then, that there are no means by which there can be a more general distribution of land and capital which would promote the wealth and welfare of the community. I do not understand the question to mean whether countries where there is less inequality of wealth are happier—say Prussia, rural Switzerland, or Norway. If it did, I would merely say that I believe that in such countries there is less wealth, but as much and as great poverty, not so squalid, not so offensive, but as great.

I do not say that nothing can be indirectly done *to lesson the inequalities* of conditions and improve

hat of the poor. Heavy taxes might be put on successions which would allow of the diminution of taxes that fall on the poor. Taxes which fall on their luxuries, but which they will pay to the lessening of their means for necessaries. The motive for saving in the rich would be diminished indeed, which is bad, and there would be shifts and evasions to avoid the tax. So, also, more of other taxation might be put on the rich. This, however, would be attended with the inconvenience, that one class would furnish the State with funds and another spend them. Education might be made gratuitous. Mr. Fawcett says "No." So I suppose allotments of small pieces of land in rural districts might be made more easy. I wish here to notice a passage in Mr. Wallace's paper:—He suggests that there should be a power of compulsorily taking land for small farms. This does not shock my notions of the respect due to property. The same argument

he uses nas occurred to me, namely: yon may take land for a railway, or canal, or school; why not for a farm? My doubt is if the farmer could be found, and the capital; when they are, I incline to think that the land also can be found. Emigration might be assisted. This, with a prudent restraint on marriage, and the bringing into the world of numbers of children, would make the poor less poor. This is most important; whatever else can be done, nothing will be effectual for the good of the labourer, unless he will help himself by not multiplying the numbers of those who possess his possession, and compete with each other for its employment. The abolition of the law of primogeniture would probably in time make the rich less rich, and so tend to reduce the inequality of condition at present existing. Whether this abolition is desirable on political considerations I do not say. That a larger number of *proprietors, if prosperous*, would be most beneficial

I doubt not. That they cannot be brought into existence by direct legislation I am certain. That they could make a living I much doubt. I offer no opinion on these various matters, as I do not think they bear on the question of a "more general distribution of capital and land." I only mention them to show they are not forgotten.

As to the other part of the question, viz.: Would the State-management of capital or land promote or impair the production of wealth and the welfare of the community, I say, without hesitation, that State-management of land or capital would impair such production and welfare. I can only repeat what I have said before,—till men are as honest, some may think as senseless, as the bees, they will not work for the community as zealously as each works for himself. Consequently the total produce will not be as great in the former as in the latter case. When each man knows that the size of his

ration will be the same whether he works or not, and knows that others will shirk, he will shirk too; and the poverty and misery of all will follow. Besides, there is the impossibility of managing such a large national farm or factory. Also such a state of things would have a most depressing, deadening effect on all, and make life a dull misery.

As to the nationalisation of land, I desire to speak of it with all the respect due to those who honestly believe in its desirability. But the scheme is impossible. If a man has the interest in a piece of land for a day, he is for that time a landowner. I suppose that in any scheme of nationalisation the tenant would have it for a year, that he might sow and reap. I suppose he would pay a rent to the State for it. Suppose £10 paid for a piece of land for a year, and suppose the occupier said, let me have it for ten years, and I will give you £20 a year, ought not the State to accept the offer?

Then suppose he said, give it me for ever and I will pay £30 a year? Again, ought not the State to agree? He would then be that hateful creature a landowner, subject to a rent-charge. Now suppose the State wanted to do work and had to borrow money, and suppose he offered to give for the redemption of the rent-charge a sum which could not be borrowed for less than £40 a year. Again, ought not the State to accept his offer? Yet in that case he would become a hopelessly, unmitigated landlord, one of those whom Mr. George calls robbers, and a proper object of plunder.

Without going into the question of natural rights this is true; when men are united in society all their rules and institutions are artificial, and if any of these is against the general good, it should be abrogated. But I am satisfied that *the institution of private property in land is for the good of society, as is the* right of each man to the benefit of his

own labour. It gives each man a motive, and the strongest, to make the best of his means and his work. I agree with the late Sir W. Siemens who said, "If an invention lay in the gutter unowned, I would give it to a particular owner, that some one might have a particular interest to develope and push it." I believe that the best thing for all is that there should be what I believe the Americans call "the largest pile." Though the shares may be unequal, there will be the greatest bulk to divide, the greatest average share, the greatest amount of enjoyment, the greatest individual wealth perhaps, but the least individual poverty.

As to the mischievous nonsense about each child being born with a right to share in the land, the short way of dealing with it is this, that he should have a share, is it expedient or not? If expedient, let him have it, whatever his right may be; if *inexpedient, refuse it* whatever his right may be. Or

rather be sure he has no right. It is nonsense to talk of such a right. As I have said all rights in a state of society are artificial. It might as well be said he had a natural right to a box at the opera.

Mr. G. Potter, in a letter to the *Times*, of July 7th, recommends "the nationalisation of land." He seems to suggest it as a remedy for the mischief occasioned by farmers having recourse to pasturage instead of tillage. Now, the farmers do this because they get the greater profit by it, and would continue to do it for that reason, even if they paid no rent for their land. They now get, or ought to get, the fair reward for their capital and personal labour. If they paid no rent they would get that rent in addition. But I infer that Mr. Potter, in consideration of their having to pay no, or less, rent, would make them revert to tillage instead of pasturage, because, as he says, the gross produce would be *greater* and the labour employed more. That may

be so. Ricardo long ago pointed out that though the net profit from the use of machinery might be greater, yet the gross produce might be less than the gross produce of the same capital using manual labour, and so there might be less for the labourer and other consumers. True. But we use machinery, and this is certain, that it is out of net profits that saving takes place and capital increases; and it is also certain that the most disastrous thing for what are called the working classes, would be to diminish this increase of capital. But how would Mr. Potter bring about this change? By a direct law that the farmer should have such a proportion of his land in tillage? I believe such a thing impracticable. But, farther, what does Mr. Potter contemplate if the farmer is to pay no, or less, rent? Confiscation? That nothing shall be received by the landowner? That if A has sold his railway stock and bought land, and B has sold his land and bought railway

stock, A shall lose his land but B keeps his railway stock? Why? It is said that the private ownership of land is robbery, and that every owner of land knows it. This, if honest, is crazy nonsense. All property exists by law and one is owned as honestly as the other. Are all the members of building societies thieves? I do not believe this is Mr. Potter's intention, though it may be that of others. As to them, the only argument I use is that if they attempt to put their opinions into practice they must be fought. But if the farmer is to pay no rent, or less rent, in consideration of his increasing his tillage, and yet the landowner is not to be plundered, where is his compensation to come from? From general internal taxation, or from a customs' duty? There is no other source. Does Mr. Potter think that either would be for the good of the community? He quotes with approval a letter which says we pay £150,000,000 a year for

what we might grow at home. But to do that every quarter of wheat which now costs, say 40*s*., would cost at least 50*s*., and other things in proportion. For you cannot raise the price of one article of food unless you raise the price of other articles which compete with it. The £150,000,000 then would cost £187,500,000; or, £37,500,000 more. Would this be a gain to the country? I have assumed that gross produce is less under pasturage than under tillage, and that labour is less; but the liberated labour is sure to be employed on other productions. The *Times* concisely disposes of Mr. Potter's idea, by saying that it is protectionist, unless it means the robbery of those who chance to own land at present. "People can always be relieved for the moment by stealing other people's goods."

Only a word as to that part of the question which *asks* about the State-management of capital. It

might as well be asked whether the State-management of capital and labour at Portland Prison is not as productive and pleasurable as the private management of them. I say capital and labour. They cannot be dissociated. Separately they are useless. Those who manage capital must manage labour. On this subject I refer to a pamphlet by Mr. Stanley Robertson on "Communism," published by the Liberty and Property Defence League.

I answer the second part of the question peremptorily in the negative.

Self-Help versus State-Help.

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